



# Governor Murphy Signs Pro-Worker Unemployment Insurance Benefits Bill

04/24/2023

*Expands Access to Benefits for Workers During Labor Disputes*

**TRENTON** – Governor Murphy today signed A4772/S3215, which concerns unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for workers during labor disputes. This bill addresses certain loopholes that currently prevent workers participating in labor disputes, such as strikes, from receiving access to UI benefits.

"Unemployment insurance benefits should be a universal right for individuals who have recently lost their jobs, are unable to find work, or are currently in the middle of a labor dispute," **said Governor Murphy**. "These benefits are crucial to allow individuals going through this process the support they need to continue to take care of themselves and their families during difficult times. This Administration will continue to stand up for the rights of workers who are the backbone of our state's economy."

In particular, the bill amends existing law to:

1. Permit UI benefits to be distributed to workers during an employer lockout even if a strike did not immediately precede the lockout;
2. decrease the timeframe from 30 days to 14 days following a strike that UI benefits are disqualified, while allowing for benefits to be paid immediately regardless of the timeframe if replacement workers are hired on either a permanent or temporary basis; and
3. clarify that there is no disqualification if an issue in the labor dispute is the failure of the employer to comply with an agreement between the parties.

This bill takes effect immediately and will apply to all UI benefit claims filed on or after January 1, 2022.

"Workers dedicate a significant portion of their lives to their careers, and they deserve to be protected financially while expressing their legal right to strike over wages, benefits and workplace conditions," **said DOL Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "This legislation is another example of the value the Murphy Administration places on its workforce."

"Often what will happen is that an employer will simply 'wait out' striking workers," **said Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli**. "Those workers are not earning a paycheck during that strike and therefore can only sustain their efforts for a limited amount of time. This bill will encourage an employer to come to the bargaining table sooner and that's beneficial for all sides."

"Union workers who face an employer lockout or take part in a strike should not be penalized financially," **said Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo**. "I'm pleased this law will close loopholes that prevented access to unemployment benefits, creating undue hardship on workers."

"Workers who go out on strike or are locked out shouldn't have to fear that they will be unable to pay their bills," **said Assemblyman Joseph Egan**. "This law enables workers to collect unemployment benefits owed to them more quickly, giving them breathing room during labor disputes."

"This will be beneficial to employees and employers alike," **said Senator Paul Sarlo, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee**. "It ensures the ability of workers involved in labor disputes to collect unemployment benefits without unfair delays and eliminates unreasonable financial penalties for businesses that act in good faith. These modifications will bring more fairness and clarity to the original law."

"Workers and their families often struggle financially when they go on strike to protest injustice in the workplace. Going on strike is a very difficult decision, but it is sometimes necessary when workers are pushed to their limits" **said Charles Wolkanech, New Jersey State AFL-CIO President**. "This law will help ease that financial hardship and we applaud Governor Murphy for standing with working people and enacting this legislation."

"The signing of this legislation is a major win for labor, it levels the playing field at the bargaining table and provides relief for union members who have to strike in order for their voices to be heard by management," **said Douglas Placa, Executive Director of JNESO District Council 1, IUOE-AFL-CIO**, the professional health care union that represents some 5,000 nurses and technicians across New Jersey and Pennsylvania. "We would like to thank the sponsors for moving this bill forward, and thank Governor Murphy for honoring his commitment to not only health care workers, but the entire labor community, by signing this legislation," he added.

"Striking workers will no longer worry that participating in a job action will result in them not being able to pay their bills, and reduce the power of management to instill that fear in workers into the future," **said Elfrieda Johnson, Board President of JNESO District Council 1, IUOE-AFL-CIO**.

"Union members put everything on the line when they vote to strike. All they hope for from the State is fair treatment," **said Rich Maroko, President, Hotel Trades Council**. "I applaud the Governor and the sponsors for bringing fairness to the unemployment insurance program by closing loopholes and expanding eligibility. Now every striking worker will be able to access the unemployment insurance benefits they paid for, on a schedule and under conditions that are clearly laid out in law."

## Governor Phil Murphy

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Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
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